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General Assembly

Official Records

Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

1441st Meeting

Monday, 27 February 1995, 10.30 a.m.
New York

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Opening of the session by the representative of the Secretary-General

Mr. de Soto (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs): I declare open the 1995 session of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to open this meeting, at which the Prime Minister of Grenada is present.

Statement by the Secretary-General

Mr. de Soto (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs): I should like to start by reading out a statement that would have been made by the Secretary-General, who is away from Headquarters and is therefore prevented from being present here today.

"This session of the Special Committee comes at a historic moment. Today we can look back on a record of success. We must also prepare to face the new, and different, challenges of the future.

"This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. It is also 35 years since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The year after the Declaration was adopted — 1961 — this Special Committee came into existence, with the task of overseeing the application of that historic resolution.

"Decolonization was a key aim of the United Nations from its inception. The Declaration was a milestone on the road towards it. The United Nations was an important factor in bringing a large number of nations, and countless millions of people, to their independence, in a remarkably short time. The Special Committee was instrumental in that process.

"Complete decolonization has not yet been achieved. I shall be discussing shortly some of the issues which remain on our agenda. But high on the list for celebration, as the world marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, are our successes in the field of decolonization. The process of decolonization has been one of the great achievements of our Organization and of our century, so it is with a sense of achievement and of gratitude to the members of the Committee, past and present, for their work that I appear before you today.

"Fifty years ago, the Charter was signed by 51 nations. Since then, a further 134 nations — many of them former colonies — have joined the Organization. Those Member States which joined the Organization after gaining their independence helped to ensure that attention was paid in it to questions of social and economic development and international trade. Today, for example, it has become generally accepted that the efforts of the Organization to build peace, stability and security must go beyond facing military threats alone. Poverty, disease, famine, oppression, human rights and democracy must also be addressed.

"The newly independent nations helped to make the Organization more universal, more legitimate and, therefore, more effective.

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"On 15 December 1994 I had the honour to admit the Republic of Palau as the one hundred and eighty-fifth Member of the Organization. I was particularly proud to receive into membership a former Trust Territory of the Organization.

"The successes of the United Nations in the field of decolonization in the past give us just cause for celebration. But our work must go on. Important challenges still lie ahead. A number of Territories have still to exercise their right to self-determination. That is why the United Nations should lose no opportunity to establish and maintain contacts with the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In this process, the cooperation of the administering Powers will continue to be essential.

"The Special Committee should also continue to encourage the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to express their wishes freely and to participate in its deliberations.

"Our approach to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories must be innovative. It must also be carefully tailored to their particular needs and locations. I have no doubt that the Committee will continue to take account of these factors and of the fast-changing world political situation.

"Clearly, the cooperation of the administering Powers will continue to be necessary as the decolonization process is brought to a successful conclusion. I am sure that the United Nations can continue to count on them to provide information on the remaining Territories.

"Experience has shown that the exercise of self-determination is facilitated by the process of economic and social development. Many of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories are small in size and in population. They are adversely affected by such factors as limited internal markets, heavy dependence on imports, lack of natural resources and vulnerability to natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes.

"I appreciate that considerable assistance is being provided to the Non-Self-Governing Territories by the administering Powers, by specialized agencies and institutions of the United Nations and by various regional organizations. But I urge all such institutions to design special programmes of economic and social assistance for those Territories. The aim should be to upgrade their infrastructures and to improve their economic, social and educational conditions and so enhance the standard of living of their inhabitants.

"In the case of Western Sahara, the General Assembly adopted, at its forty-ninth session, a consensus resolution which took note of Security Council resolution 907 (1994) and of my report on the question. It also reaffirmed the goal of a free, fair and impartial referendum for the people of Western Sahara.

"The Security Council, which continues to be seized of the matter, is following closely the implementation of the settlement plan. On the ground, the identification process is under way. I reported on the matter to the Council on 14 December 1994. I expressed the hope that progress achieved by 31 March 1995 would be sufficient to allow me to confirm the timetable I had proposed. That would lead to the organization of the referendum in October 1995.

"Decolonization under United Nations guidance has now entered its final phase. In 1988, the General Assembly proclaimed 1990 to 2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. That is not an unrealistic target, but important challenges lie ahead; the Special Committee still has significant tasks before it. The Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly for the implementation of the International Decade is both a framework for action and an instrument by which progress can be measured.

"We welcome support in this endeavour from all Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the media.

"Let me assure the Committee of my full cooperation in its efforts. Together we fulfil the General Assembly's objective of putting an end to colonial situations by the year 2000."

Thus ends the statement of the Secretary-General.

Having assumed new responsibilities in the Secretariat which include this Committee, I should like personally to offer my own continued assistance, as I have already done

privately to the members of the Bureau, both outgoing and incoming.

Election of officers

Mr. de Soto (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs): I understand that members of the Committee are in agreement that the following representatives should be elected Committee officers for the current year: Ambassador Eugene M. Pursoo of Grenada as the Chairman of the Committee; and Mr. Farouk Al-Attar of the Syrian Arab Republic as the Rapporteur.

Accordingly, I declare those representatives elected unanimously.

I understand that the Committee will elect its Vice-Chairmen as soon as the related consultations have been finalized.

I extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Rapporteur, and I look forward to working closely with all members in the coming months.

I now invite Ambassador Pursoo and Mr. Al-Attar to take their places at the podium.

Mr. Pursoo (Grenada) took the Chair.

The Chairman: I should like, on behalf of the members of the Special Committee, to express our deep appreciation to you, Mr. Assistant Secretary-General, for addressing this body on behalf of the Secretary-General. We are indeed proud that the tireless efforts of this Committee have significantly contributed to the increased membership of the United Nations, making it truly universal. I should also like to assure the Secretary-General, through you, that the members of the Committee appreciate his continuing support and his commitment to the cause of decolonization and that we look forward to continuing to work closely with him towards our common objective.

I address my sincere thanks and profound gratitude to the members of the Committee for the trust and confidence they have placed in me and in my country in electing me to the chairmanship of this very important body. I should like to assure the Committee of my commitment and that of my country to the cause of decolonization. I will do my utmost to enable this Committee to discharge its mandate successfully and I count on the support, active participation and experience of its members to assist me in this very important mission.

As the Committee begins its 1995 session, the world celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. Universal attention is being focused on all areas of United Nations activities. The international community pays tribute to the United Nations achievements in the decolonization process and is determined to enter a twenty-first century free of colonialism. Let us do our best to live up to that determination by continuing to discharge our mandate with consistency and wisdom. This year, which also marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, will open a new era in the striving of peoples towards self-determination and freedom.

The Committee will continue to examine in-depth political, economic, social and educational conditions in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories with a view to assisting the peoples of those Territories in achieving progress towards self-government and creating the necessary conditions for the exercise of self-determination. We shall pay particular attention to any problems that might inhibit the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). We will try to identify those problems and find suitable solutions. We will do our best to ensure that the interests of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories are safeguarded and that their evolution towards self-determination conforms to their freely expressed wishes.

The Special Committee is fully aware that there are many outcomes from an act of self-determination. In some instances, independence may be the preferred result. In other cases, and in keeping with resolution 1541 (XV), the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory may decide to opt for a form of free association in recognition of the fact that its current economic situation may derive advantages that may stem from its link to the administering Power.

The Committee will maintain its contacts with the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. We will encourage those representatives to cooperate with the Committee in assisting its members to understand, and respond to the needs of the peoples of those Territories.

Relations between the Committee and the administering Powers continue to be of paramount importance. We should like to reiterate that we remain ready to cooperate with all administering Powers with only

one objective in mind: the interests of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in accordance with a strict interpretation of our mandate.

Our task would be significantly facilitated if all the administering Powers would provide us with information and if they would agree to participate in our deliberations. In this context, I should like, on the Committee's behalf, to appeal to the administering Powers to facilitate the dispatch of visiting missions to Territories under their administration, as the best means of ascertaining the legitimate wishes and aspirations of the peoples.

I take this opportunity to express the Committee's appreciation to the Government of New Zealand, the administering Power of Tokelau, for its continued cooperation. The visiting mission of the Committee to Tokelau last year obtained first-hand information on the views and wishes of the people of that Territory with regard to their future political status and presented a comprehensive report which was adopted unanimously by this Committee. I am very pleased to note that the mission in no way disrupted the relationship between the people of Tokelau and the administering Power but rather contributed to enhancing it, and that its conclusions and recommendations faithfully reflected the true wishes of the people of Tokelau.

The Committee will continue to do its best to give realistic consideration to the specific needs of and conditions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, towards that end, will promote the rights of those Territories to self-determination within the constraints imposed by their special circumstances. This will require new and suitable solutions, defined in close consultation with the administering Powers and the representatives of the peoples of the Territories.

The remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories require continuous cooperation and assistance from the international community to surmount the challenges they face. The economic and social assistance rendered by the specialized agencies and international institutions of the United Nations system should be increased and redesigned to create special programmes of assistance to those Territories, bearing in mind their specific characteristics, such as their small areas and populations, their remoteness, their limited resources and internal markets, their dependence on imports, and their vulnerability to natural disasters and environmental hazards.

Clearly, we have an ample task ahead of us. I am sure that, with the continued dedication of the members of the Committee, the participation and support of the legitimate representatives of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the necessary cooperation of the administering Powers, the Special Committee will achieve the goals set forth in the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and will be able to usher in the new millennium free of colonialism.

In conclusion, in accepting the responsibilities of Chairman of the Special Committee, I welcome and extend my congratulations to our Rapporteur, Mr. Farouk Al-Attar of the Syrian Arab Republic. I also wish to commend the secretariat of the Committee for its conscientious work in the service of decolonization since the Committee's inception. I count on the full and active cooperation of the Bureau and the continued support of the secretariat in accomplishing the work of the Special Committee this year.

Before proceeding to the next item on our agenda, I should like to reiterate the Committee's appreciation and gratitude to the Assistant-Secretary-General for opening the 1995 session and for delivering the very important statement he made on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Organization of work (A/AC.109/L.1827 and L.1828)

The Chairman: Members have before them in document A/AC.109/L.1827 a note by the Secretary-General in which he draws the attention of the members to the resolutions and decisions relevant to our work in 1995.

Members also have before them a note prepared by me, in document A/AC.109/L.1828, containing suggestions on the manner in which the Committee may wish to organize its work for the year.

Mr. Yulianto (Indonesia): On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, I should like, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our cooperation in the discharge of the tasks ahead.

Permit me also to convey, on behalf of the Indonesian delegation, our appreciation of the impartial and efficient manner in which Ambassador Remirez de Estenoz Barciela of Cuba conducted the work of the Special Committee during the last session. His leadership and experience helped the Committee conclude its business with success. We have all come to admire his diplomatic skill and the

unique personal qualities that he brought to bear in the Special Committee even as he prepared to leave the United Nations and New York. May I wish him Godspeed and success in all his future endeavours.

Having reviewed the agenda of the Special Committee, my delegation cannot but express its regret over the inclusion of the so-called question of East Timor. Our position is well known, and I shall merely state that the people of East Timor have already exercised their right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV), thus terminating the colonial status of the former Territory.

It is indisputable that, nearly two decades after integration, the people of the province have achieved substantial and tangible progress in all aspects of life. To oppose integration is to disregard the decision of the people of East Timor to achieve freedom and independence through unity with Indonesia. Only by supporting integration can the well-being of the people of East Timor be assured and their aspirations fulfilled.

We should also like to remind the Committee that, since 1976, the East Timorese people have participated freely in several elections, at both the national and local levels. Clearly, this is a reaffirmation of the desire and will of the people of East Timor to share fully in the same rights and benefits guaranteed by the Indonesian constitution to all citizens of the nation. Therefore, East Timor has now ceased to be an issue of self-determination or decolonization and does not warrant the spending of any more of the Committee's time.

Further, the inclusion of the situation in the Special Committee's programme of work and discussions thereon can serve no purpose whatsoever. My delegation therefore rejects the inclusion of this item and requests that its opposition to that inclusion be reflected in the official records of the Special Committee.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his kind words of congratulation on my ascendance to the chairmanship, and I wish to assure him that the reservations he has expressed will be fully reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

I call on the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Catarino (Portugal): Let me start by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this important Committee, and Mr. Farouk Al-Attar on his election as Rapporteur.

Let me also express our appreciation for the presence of His Excellency the Prime Minister of Grenada, to whom I extend our greetings. His presence among us is a sign of the importance the Government of Grenada attaches to the work of this important Committee and to decolonization matters.

It was not my intention to intervene today, but I cannot let pass what the representative of Indonesia has just said concerning the question of East Timor without making some remarks.

We cannot see how Indonesia can claim that East Timor has ceased to be an issue of decolonization or self-determination and that the question should not be included in the Committee's agenda. The item is included in the agendas of both the General Assembly and the Special Committee. The Security Council has remained seized of this matter since December 1975. It is clear that the United Nations does not recognize the process of decolonization as having been completed.

The representative of Indonesia said that the people of East Timor had already exercised their right of self-determination. As I have just said, the United Nations and the international community have never recognized the decolonization process of East Timor as being completed. Moreover, Indonesia has failed so far to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Portugal has repeatedly stated that it has no claims whatsoever to sovereignty over the Territory of East Timor, but, as the administering Power of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of East Timor and in the fulfilment of its responsibility, Portugal is defending and will continue to defend the rights of the East Timorese people, to whom we have moral, historical and legal obligations.

As is well known, talks are taking place, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at reaching a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement of this question. Portugal is actively engaged in these talks, and we sincerely hope that progress can be made. We are open to any settlement based on the expression of the free will of the people of East Timor and acceptable to the international community. Portugal wishes for the East Timorese people to be able to live in peace, harmony and freedom.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Portugal for the remarks of congratulation offered to my Prime Minister and to me. I wish to assure him that the reservations he has expressed will be fully reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

Mr. Yuliantoro (Indonesia): Allow me to respond briefly. In its statement to the Special Committee on 14 July 1994, the Indonesian delegation stated that any remaining question regarding East Timor should be dealt with in the ongoing dialogue between Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the Secretary-General. Let me reiterate at this point that Indonesia is fully committed to the search for a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question.

The Chairman: As regards the suggestion contained in paragraph 1 of the "Note by the Chairman" (A/AC.109/L.1828), it appears that members are in agreement that the Committee should maintain its Working Group and the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: According to indications received, I understand that members are in agreement that Ambassador Utula Utuoc Samana of Papua New Guinea should serve as Chairman of the Subcommittee and that Miss Cecilia Mackenna of Chile should serve as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur.

In the absence of any indications otherwise, I shall take it that the Committee so agrees.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the "Note by the Chairman" relate to the suggested allocation of items and procedure for consideration. As will be noted, most of these suggestions are based on views expressed at last year's session, which, I believe, will facilitate the effective discharge of our task this year.

If I hear no further comments on this matter, I shall consider that members approve these suggestions, it being understood that appropriate modifications may be made as developments warrant.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to remind members that, in accordance with the programme of meetings for the year approved by the General Assembly under resolution 49/221, and with the recommendation made by the Bureau on 30 January 1995, the Subcommittee is scheduled to meet in May to complete consideration of the items allocated to it for review and reporting. I wish to request the Subcommittee to make optimum use of the limited time available to it.

As members will recall, for the last four years the Committee has established an open-ended Working Group with responsibility for making recommendations on how to improve further the efficiency of its work in the light of ongoing developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. As the Committee is aware, certain recommendations by the Working Group were adopted by the Committee that enabled it to make some reforms. Bearing that in mind, and if members agree, I wish to suggest that the Working Group continue to study ways and means of expediting the Committee's mandate and to make the appropriate recommendations to that effect.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Committee agrees to my suggestion.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: The Committee will hold a summer session to complete its work. We will also hold plenary meetings whenever necessary to take decisions formally on a number of issues.

As in the past, I intend to continue informal consultations with Committee members and other parties concerned on a number of pending questions. I hope that these consultations will considerably facilitate our work when the time comes to begin our summer meetings. As approved by the General Assembly, and in order to allow the Secretariat and the Rapporteur sufficient time to prepare the Committee's report to the General Assembly, we will hold these plenary meetings in July and conclude our work before the end of that month.

As members are aware, the Committee annually reviews additional measures that might possibly be taken to curtail its documentation requirements. Bearing in mind the substantial progress made to date in this regard, I would ask members to continue to exercise their initiative in cooperating fully with the efforts of the Organization.

At this stage, I would like to draw members' attention to paragraphs 8 to 10 of my Note, relating to the utilization of conference-servicing resources. As indicated in the Note, at its forty-ninth session the General Assembly waived rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly in order to permit meetings to be declared open and debates to proceed without the presence of the quorum required under those rules. It is therefore my intention to convene the meetings of the Committee at the scheduled time to make the maximum use of the services available to the Committee. I am confident that I shall receive the full cooperation of all members in this regard.

As regards invitations extended to the Committee, I would suggest that the Committee authorize me to hold consultations, as appropriate, concerning its participation or otherwise in those and other meetings, and concerning the level of representation when accepting invitations.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: As we are close to the end of this morning's meeting, let me take this opportunity to say how honoured I am that my Prime Minister took time off from his busy schedule to visit the Committee on the day I was elected its Chairman. I thank him very much.

Mr. Seniloli (Fiji): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, I wish first to welcome the Prime Minister of Grenada and to thank him for honouring us this morning with his presence on the occasion of your election.

Secondly, let me congratulate you, Sir, or your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. I would like to assure you of our support and cooperation in the Committee's work this year. I also extend warm congratulations to Mr. Al-Attar on being elected once again as Rapporteur.

At the same time, I offer my heartiest congratulations to Ambassador Samana of Papua New Guinea, who will be chairing the Subcommittee. We offer him all our support and cooperation in the deliberations of that body.

Mr. Samana (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of my delegation, let me offer my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Committee of 24. At the same time, my delegation wishes to offer its congratulations to Mr. Al-Attar, who has been elected as Rapporteur of this Committee.

The presence of the Prime Minister of Grenada gives an added recognition of the importance of this Committee. We wish to thank him for his presence and wish him well in his leadership.

You are assuming the chairmanship, Sir, at a very important stage in the work of the United Nations, as it prepares to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. My delegation is confident that your leadership abilities and diplomatic skills will ensure the efficient work of this important Committee. We assure you of our support.

At least one sector of the United Nations work in which it can be proud of its achievement is the area of decolonization. The role of the United Nations in assisting, guiding and supporting the process of decolonization is one of the greatest and most important achievements in the history of mankind. As we celebrate the United Nations existence and role over this half-century and as we look towards the decades ahead, we can do so with hope and determination on the basis of the positive achievements of the United Nations in facing the ever-increasing problems of the world and the enormous tasks and difficulties ahead of us.

Leaders during the past decades showed much courage, wisdom and tenacity in standing up for peace and global unity against all odds and in the midst of the devastating effects of war and uncertainty. They shaped new visions and new institutions to steer the course of the world to the better, and we have inherited these. We of this generation, with the advantages of improved technology and skills and the enhanced institutional capacities and resources available to us, have a greater responsibility to persevere and to continue the war against poverty, underdevelopment, discrimination and injustice. These are great challenges.

The Committee will therefore require adequate levels of resources to fulfil its mandate as we move towards the end; by the year 2000 of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It is at these last stages of our work that we must focus better and more effectively in undertaking our responsibilities, as is expected of us by the international community, and as is in accordance with the aspirations and wishes of those who are still under colonial administration and, of course, with the United Nations Charter.

In citing examples of the work of decolonization with respect to the South Pacific region, I must stress that the isolated communities of the South Pacific, whose economies are vulnerable to factors beyond their control, require

specific attention with regard to innovative constitution-making more conducive to their particular geographic, economic and political situations.

Some of the approaches of such small island colonies — and even of independent States — to constitution-making are unique, and may not at times conform to the United Nations notion of total self-determination. These entities require consistent institutional arrangements with the appropriate United Nations organs for their development needs. The work of the Special Committee therefore requires further expertise in these area to assist the Secretariat in fulfilling our mandate before the Decade ends — and after.

We therefore lend our support to you, Mr. Chairman, in the way you perceive the importance and continuity of this work and what it requires, taking account also of the statement of the Secretary-General.

Papua New Guinea extends its support to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Bureau, as well as to the work of the Committee in general.

The Chairman: I thank the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea for the warm welcome and good wishes he extended to my Prime Minister and for his kind words addressed to me.

I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his election to the chairmanship of the Subcommittee.

Mr. Bangura (Sierra Leone): Permit me, first of all, to welcome His Excellency the Prime Minister of Grenada, who has honoured us this morning with his presence, a presence that speaks volumes for the significance he attaches to the work of the Special Committee.

Permit me also to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the Rapporteur, Mr. Al-Attar, on your elections. I assure you, Sir, that you can count on the undiminished commitment of the delegation of Sierra Leone and of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone to the cause of decolonization. Over the years, Sierra Leone, with determination and confidence, has stood alongside all those who have fought for that cause. The importance of that cause is undiminished.

As you take on your responsibilities, Sir, you can count on our cooperation and support.

The Chairman: I thank the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone for his words of welcome to my Prime Minister and for his congratulations to me. I thank him also for his country's ongoing and future support for the Committee.

Mr. Larrain (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish first to extend a special welcome to the Prime Minister of Grenada. His presence here today is a genuine honour for us, and serves to bolster and enhance the work of the Committee. I wish also warmly to congratulate you, Mr. Farouk Al-Attar and Mr. Samana on your respective elections.

On behalf of Miss Cecilia Mackenna of my delegation, I thank members for electing her to the post of Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Subcommittee. Through her, my delegation will continue its enthusiastic participation in the work of the Committee, to which Chile attaches special importance.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Chile for his warm words of welcome to my Prime Minister and for his kind words addressed to me. I request him to convey our congratulations to Miss Cecilia Mackenna on her election.

Mr. Moreno Fernández (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): This morning's meeting is a joyful occasion for us, the representatives of the Caribbean countries — not only, Sir, because of your election as Chairman of the Committee for this year, but also because of the presence among us of His Excellency the Prime Minister of Grenada. We believe that his presence begins our work on an auspicious note; it marks the Government of Grenada's support for you as Chairman, Sir, and for the Special Committee of 24.

As a representative of a Caribbean country I am proud that the Chairman this year comes from another country of the region. We are prepared, Sir, to give you our full support and cooperation.

I wish also to congratulate my friend Mr. Farouk Al-Attar on his election to the post of Rapporteur, to Ambassador Samana of Papua New Guinea on his election to the chairmanship of the Subcommittee, and to Miss Cecilia Mackenna of Chile on her election as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of that body.

As members know, the then Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cuba served as Acting Chairman of the

Special Committee in 1994, which enabled my delegation to gain experience in the work of this body. Today, Sir, we humbly place that experience at your disposal in the hope that it will help make your term of office as effective and efficient as possible. In short, Mr. Chairman, we are at your entire disposal.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Cuba for his warm welcome to my Prime Minister and for his words of congratulation to me. I ask him to convey the Committee's appreciation to our colleague, the former Permanent Representative of Cuba, for the able way in which he guided the work of the Committee in 1994.

Mr. Keita (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to express my delegation's pleasure and gratitude to the Prime Minister of Grenada for honouring us with his presence at our first meeting despite his busy schedule in New York. This should come as no surprise, given the diligence of the delegation of Grenada in working to achieve the Committee's objectives from the moment it became a member.

My delegation would like to express its warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Rapporteur of the Special Committee, Mr. Farouk Al-Attar. We should like also to express our heartfelt and warm congratulations to the Chairman of the Subcommittee, Ambassador Samana, and voice our gratitude to his predecessor, Ambassador Insanally, for his guidance of the Committee's work. Nor does my delegation forget the Rapporteur of the Subcommittee, Miss Cecilia Mackenna. The dedication of the Rapporteurs of the Special Committee and of the Subcommittee has been outstanding in all respects and it must be acknowledged that the active participation of quite a few delegations is attributable to the fact that the Rapporteurs have always produced the reports we need for our work in time. We wish to congratulate them most warmly for this.

My country — Mali — achieved independence and sovereignty and was admitted to the United Nations on 28 September 1960, and just four months later was elected to this Committee. It has been a member for 35 years now, and during that time it has always tried to demonstrate the persistence and dynamism necessary for participation in the Committee's work. My country is now in its third Republic. The first Republic lasted from 1960 until 1968, the second from 1968 until 1991, and since 1992 we have had the third. All the country's constitutions since 1960 have had as their prime and fundamental objective the total liberation of Africa. Thank God that liberation is now total, or nearly so.

Our constitutions also made and make provision for doing everything necessary to help all the other peoples of the world to combat injustice and exploitation and to accede to total sovereignty over their resources, to political, economic and other freedoms. My country has worked and always will work towards that end and my delegation, which is proud to be a member of the Committee, will spare no effort to achieve it. We therefore stand ready to cooperate with the Bureaux of the Committee and the Subcommittee, and will never be found wanting in that regard.

We congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and encourage you in the work that lies ahead of you. We must succeed in achieving what the General Assembly has asked us to achieve — the total liberation of the world by the year 2000.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Mali for his warm words of welcome to my Prime Minister and for his congratulations addressed to me.

Mr. Viswanathan (India): I should like to join my colleagues in welcoming the Prime Minister of Grenada. His presence among us provides the Committee with great moral support and encouragement, which we appreciate.

My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee, and Mr. Al-Attar on his assumption of the post of Rapporteur. We should like also to extend our congratulations to the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea and the representative of Chile on their becoming officers-bearers of the Subcommittee.

We attach importance to the fact that you, Sir, are chairing the Committee this year, which we consider an important year in the Committee's work. Firstly, we have commenced preparations for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations. As other representatives have pointed out, decolonization has been one of the proudest achievements of the United Nations in its 50 years. Secondly, we have declared the 1990s the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Now that we have reached 1995 — the mid-point of the decade — it is time to assess the work of the past five years and to consider how to proceed in the next five. It is for that reason that we attach particular importance to the Committee's work this year.

My country has taken a very keen interest and has participated actively in the Committee's work from the beginning, and I give you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Committee my assurance of our continued cooperation and support.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of India for his words of welcome to my Prime Minister and for his congratulations addressed to me.

Mr. Mwambulukutu (United Republic of Tanzania): Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to associate my delegation with those that have expressed profound appreciation for the presence of the Prime Minister of Grenada as we begin our work today. His presence is further testimony of your country's commitment to decolonization as we embark on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, and only five years or so before the deadline of the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

Your assumption of the chairmanship, Sir, is most important — indeed, crucial — at this moment in our last spurt towards decolonization. We are equally happy at the re-election of Mr. Farouk Al-Attar to serve as our Rapporteur once again. The election of the representative of Papua New Guinea to chair the Subcommittee is also most welcome, considering the role that his country has played in chairing the main Committee. It continues to serve us in this new capacity. The role played by Cuba in taking on the responsibilities of Acting Chairman before your assumption of the chairmanship, Sir, is highly appreciated. Equally, we commend the re-election of the representative of Chile to serve the Committee.

Tanzania has a long history of commitment to the anti-colonialism struggle. Since independence in 1961, it has continuously served on this Committee — including many years as Chairman. I assure you, Mr. Chairman, of Tanzania's unflinching cooperation with and support for you and the rest of the Bureau as we embark on the important task ahead of us.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania for his warm words of welcome to my Prime Minister and for his congratulations addressed to me.

Mrs. Khan-Cummings (Trinidad and Tobago): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to offer our congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. I also wish to express my pleasure at the presence of the Prime Minister of Grenada with us in New York on this occasion. We wish to thank the Prime Minister for honouring us with his presence here.

Mr. Chairman, we have confidence in your ability to steer the work of the Committee during the deliberations that lie ahead and to take the process of decolonization to a further stage as we move nearer to the target year of 2000 set by the General Assembly. As has been mentioned by other representatives, the Committee's work in the process of decolonization has been one of the successes of the United Nations in its 50-year history.

We should also like to assure you, Sir, of our full cooperation and support as you carry out the tasks that lie ahead. Permit me also to extend my congratulations to the Rapporteur on his re-election to the post. I am sure he will acquit himself as creditably as he did during the last session. I should also like to offer my congratulations to the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea on his election to the post of Chairman of the Subcommittee, and to the representative of Chile on her election to the post of Rapporteur. We look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and with the other members of the Bureau.

I should also like to express my thanks to the outgoing Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Cuba, for his hard work and diligence, and for his efficient handling of the Committee's work during our last session. As he prepares to leave the United Nations, I wish him well.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Trinidad and Tobago for the warm words of welcome she addressed to my Prime Minister and for the congratulations she extended to me.

I call on the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Wilson (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Special Committee, and to welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of Grenada, who is attending this meeting to witness this historical moment.

I also wish to extend my congratulations to Mr. Farouk Al-Attar on his re-election as Rapporteur, to the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea on his election as Chairman of the Subcommittee, and to the representative of Chile as the Subcommittee's Rapporteur.

As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, my country is geographically close to your own, just some three miles. As Member States from the Caribbean, we have participated together in a number of organizations. We took part together in the early struggles aimed at ensuring that our countries became independent from the colonial Powers, and we have done so with some degree of success.

This is the first time I have attended a meeting of the Special Committee. As an observer, I am fully convinced that during the course of the session I will be approaching the relevant authorities within the Committee to seek active membership.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to extend to you every good wish for success during your tenure as you carry out your duties with your customary skill and fortitude.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the warm words of welcome he addressed to my Prime Minister and for the congratulations he extended to me. I also wish him success when his request for membership of this Committee is dealt with by the appropriate authorities.

I call on the Rapporteur to address the Committee.

Mr. Al-Attar (Rapporteur of the Committee) *(interpretation from Arabic):* First of all, Mr. Chairman, I should like to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this important committee. My delegation has no doubt that your diplomatic expertise and your experience as a Caribbean will be of assistance to the Caribbean region as a whole, which still contains certain territories that are not yet independent. Your skills and experience will certainly help our Committee to succeed in its work. Also, the presence of the Prime Minister of Grenada at this meeting is a clear sign of the interest of Grenada in the work of the Committee.

I should like to thank the members of the Committee for the confidence they have placed in me in electing me once again as Rapporteur, and to say that I will make every possible effort, in cooperation with the Chairman and the other officers of the Bureau, to ensure success in accomplishing the Committee's mandate. This decade must be the one in which we put a total end to colonization.

We should like to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea on his election as Chairman of the Subcommittee, and Miss Cecilia Mackenna of Chile on her election as its Rapporteur.

On this occasion, we should also recall the excellent work accomplished by the previous Permanent Representative of Cuba, who was Acting Chairman of the Committee last year. We must also recall the work of the representative of Tunisia, who chaired the Subcommittee. Their work was excellent.

Once again, I thank the members of the Committee for the confidence they have placed in me and express the hope that the Committee will duly demonstrate its great importance to the United Nations through how much it has accomplished and will continue to accomplish for the rest of this decade.

The Chairman: I thank the Rapporteur for the words of welcome he addressed to my Prime Minister and for the congratulations he extended to me.

Let me take this opportunity, on behalf of all the members of the Bureau just elected, particularly those who are not present and do not have the opportunity to do so themselves — that is, on behalf of Mr. Samana, Chairman of the Subcommittee, and Miss Cecilia Mackenna, its Rapporteur and Vice-Chairman — to express our appreciation to the Committee.

The date of the next meeting of the Committee will be announced in the *Journal*.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.